

"They don't want to change, they just want to be happy!" therapist Jac's lament



Listen Now: Prospect Hill: Three's More Than A Crowd

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Photo: IU Department of Theatre, Drama and Contemporary Dance

A mixed neighborhood just west of downtown Bloomington.

Event Information

Prospect Hill

An IU third year thesis play by Bruce Walsh directed by Ansley Valentine with scenic design by Jennie Fischer and music by Kimberly Osberg

Wells-Metz Theatre

March 24, 25, 28-31, 2017 @ 7:30 p.m. April 1 @ 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Prospect Hill is a thought provoking, funny and moving play by IU MFA playwright Bruce Walsh. It's making its debut in skillfully directed production directed by Ansley Valentine with a very neat set by Jennie Fisher in the Wells-Metz Theatre. The play is named after a mixed neighborhood in Bloomington near the Rose Hill Cemetery. It's where Hoagy Carmichael is buried.

The play is actually set in Prospect Hill and as the audience was getting seated on Tuesday night a recording of WFIU's Ask the Mayor was playing with Joe Hren interviewing Bloomington's Mayor Hamilton about the current annexation issue.

As the lights come up Chris Handley playing Jacob Stichter is sleeping on the living room couch. It's an emblematic scene of marital discord. Shortly Jac's husband, Rex Isaak, played by Joshua Robinson comes down stairs. Rex is a well off retired drug salesman. He owns the house and supports Jac's sliding scale mental therapy practice.

At the moment the two men are stuck. Jac's frustrated with his practice... "they don't want to change, they just want to be happy," he laments. His once active religious faith is no longer consoling. He wonders if he's tired of being married. Rex seem to be increasingly taken with spiritual aspects of yoga practice, but slow recovery from severe health issues for the once vigorous older man have limited their intimacy.

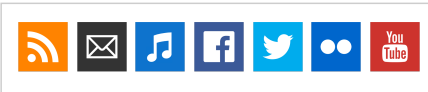
Jac's patient Ethan, Joshua Smith is Prospect Hill's catalyst. Ethan is a delivery driver for a soft drink company. He's, "Bloomington, born and bred," a townie who's still proud that he went to North high school and continues to think that South was snobby. Ethan's twitchy but he's happy to be off hard drugs. Ethan's pleased to have regular job and observes that in six months he might join the union. However, he's nervous about his pregnant girlfriend and his future finances. Jac is encouraging Ethan to have a more positive self-image with a little anger management thrown in to the mix.

Rex comes to think that Ethan needs some adult male modeling and in a series of rituals, beginning with a painful arm wrestling scenario encourages him to pursue the career he practiced as a drug salesman. Jac resents Rex's work with a character that he still thinks of as his patient. Despite Rex's buildup, his padding of Ethan's resume and Jac's grudging support, Ethan doesn't get the job. In a strange twist, the

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pharmaceutical company asks Jac to consider the job. Ethan is devastated. Rex is disappointed at hi pupil's failure and curiously threatened by Jac's success.

There's lots more to the fascination of the touching and often very funny story in *Prospect Hill* and I haven't even mentioned how a large exercise ball frees the lower chakras of all involve, the three some's discussions of just where god is in the trinity or where all six of the parts of a Joseph Campbell documentary lead Rex. Joshua Robinson, Chris J. Handley and Joshua M. Smith do wonderful service in compelling performances.

Bruce Walsh's *Prospect Hill* plays through Saturday April 1 in the Wells-Metz Theatre

You can find this review and an interview with Walsh and dramaturg Bridget Sundin on our web site at [WFIU.ORG/Arts](http://WFIU.ORG/Arts)

At the theatre for you, I'm George Walker



While completing an M.A.T. degree in English at Indiana University, George Walker began announcing for WFIU in 1967. Along with regularly hosting classical music shows, he interviews artists and reviews plays and operas.

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